

India Pulls Out of Ayni Airbase in Tajikistan: Strategic Impact Explained

November 10, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com



Ayni Airbase Latest News

- India has withdrawn its personnel and equipment from the Ayni airbase in Tajikistan, its only full-fledged overseas military base, which it had developed and maintained for nearly two decades.
- The base had provided **strategic access to Central Asia** and a geopolitical advantage over Pakistan, while symbolising India's growing influence in a region shaped by Russia and China.
- The withdrawal marks a significant shift in India's regional military presence and strategic outreach in Central Asia.

Ayni Airbase: India's Strategic Outpost in Central Asia

- The Ayni airbase in **Tajikistan**, located about 20 km from **Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor near PoK and China's Xinjiang**, served as a key strategic hub for India.

- Initially used during India's support to the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, it also facilitated the evacuation of Indian nationals from Kabul in 2021.
- Originally a Soviet-era base, Ayni was renovated by India at a cost of around \$80 million under a 2002 bilateral agreement, with work led by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- India upgraded it with a 3,200-metre runway, hangars, fuel depots, and air traffic control systems.
- At its peak, about 200 Indian Army and IAF personnel, along with Sukhoi-30 MKI jets, were stationed there.
- After the agreement lapsed, India began withdrawing its troops and assets in 2022, marking the end of its two-decade military presence at this vital Central Asian outpost.

Why India Withdrew from the Ayni Airbase

- India stated that its bilateral agreement with Tajikistan for the rehabilitation and use of the Ayni airbase had ended, and the facility was formally handed back in 2022.
- The Tajik government reportedly declined to renew the lease, influenced by pressure from Russia and China, both of which have strong strategic interests in the region.
- India's withdrawal of personnel and equipment followed quietly, with the development becoming public only recently.

Strategic Implications of India's Withdrawal from Ayni Airbase

- The Ayni airbase was India's only operational overseas military base, giving it a crucial strategic foothold in Central Asia.
- Located near **Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor**—bordering China's Xinjiang and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir—the base offered India valuable security and intelligence advantages in a geopolitically sensitive region.
- India's withdrawal marks a setback for its regional influence, as it loses a key vantage point for monitoring activities involving China and Pakistan.
- It also ends two decades of significant investment in building and maintaining this strategic outpost.

India's Overseas Military Presence: Limited but Strategically Expanding

- With the withdrawal from **Ayni airbase in Tajikistan**, India currently **does not operate any full-fledged overseas military base** in another country.

Strategic Infrastructure in Mauritius

- In 2024, India and Mauritius inaugurated an airstrip and jetty on **Agaléga Island** in the western Indian Ocean.
- These facilities extend India's maritime reach across the Indian Ocean and enhance surveillance over waters near Africa's east coast, countering China's growing influence.
- The upgraded airstrip now allows operation of P-8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft, strengthening India's naval capabilities.

Military Cooperation with Bhutan

- India maintains a training team in Bhutan, responsible for training the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) and the Royal Bodyguard (RBG), symbolising deep military cooperation.
- India has previously operated overseas during specific missions — from **Bangladesh** and **Sri Lanka** during the **1971 war** and the **IPKF deployment**, respectively.

Global Context

- While India has a modest overseas footprint, China operates a base in Djibouti and is reportedly expanding in Tajikistan.
- The United States, by contrast, maintains over 100 overseas bases across key regions like South Korea, Qatar, Germany, and Japan, underscoring the global disparity in military reach.

Source: IE | BS

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/india-pulls-out-of-ayni-airbase-in-tajikistan-strategic-impact-explained/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.